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# NOTES ON THE ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RECENT EXHIBITION IN THE  
GALLERY OF THE BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB

1877

BY THE

REV. CHARLES HENRY MIDDLETON

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JOHN WILSON  
12 KING WILLIAM STREET, CHARING CROSS  
1877

THE FOLLOWING ESSAYS upon Rembrandt's work are reprinted, with very few alterations, from the 'Academy.' Though the later papers are made to refer to the superb collection recently exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, the notes on which they are founded, especially the criticisms upon the doubtful or disputed pieces, were written long before I became a member of the Club, or knew that such an Exhibition was in prospect.

*July 1877.*



# NOTES

## ON THE

### ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT.



#### I.

*February 24, 1877.*

It will, I think, be acknowledged that to study to any real purpose the works of a great artist whose labours were prolonged over many years, we must first form some idea as to the order in which those works were executed—must know which are the earlier and which are the later productions of the master. I do not mean to assert that without such knowledge it is impossible to entertain a just and very sincere admiration for a particular work. A true lover of art in its highest forms feels the consciousness of excellence and beauty wherever he meets with it, and it would be mere pedantry to say that his enjoyment is limited because he is not acquainted with perhaps some hundred other works by the same hand, or because he is unable to decide on the exact date or relative position of the one before him. My assertion means no more than this, that if the student or amateur determines to acquaint himself with the works of a master—a great engraver, for instance—it will not be sufficient to examine a series of prints, however complete, which are placed before him in any arbitrary order, or perhaps in no order at all; he must know how to examine them in the order of their production, or his acquaintance with the master will always be imperfect. And yet any really satisfactory aids to his research may possibly be very few. The well-instructed amateur experiences but little difficulty in deciding on the period when some particular engraving was produced; but such a decision is entirely beyond the power of the student, who is too often assumed to possess a knowledge which only long and patient observation can impart.

To fix the exact period of an undated work, not only a close insight into the technic of its author is required, but other things must frequently be taken into account. Some little peculiarity in the pose of a figure, in the turn of a hand, the fold of a dress, the adoption of a costume, perhaps the occurrence of a single leaf or little spray of foliage, it may be the form of an initial or the spelling of a name, may help to fix a date; a hint is gathered here, a suggestion presents itself there; and if after all we do not arrive at certainty, we shall frequently find that the 'unconsidered trifle' we have as it were almost unconsciously 'picked up' has led us to a nearer approximation to a date than we could otherwise have attained; no information that aids our search, however slight it may at first seem, is to be despised.

I do not know why it should have been asserted that to class in their order the undated works of Rembrandt must ever be a vain attempt, and yet we have been told that the difficulties in the way are too great to be overcome. It has been said with truth that his best works are always superb—that



from first to last we see no trace of immature weakness or failing powers; but the most regardless observer must have remarked the singular variation from time to time in his style and execution. Rembrandt had his earlier, his middle, and his later periods: the rare excellences of each are seen in such paintings as 'The Lesson in Anatomy' (1632), in 'The Night Watch' (1642), and in 'The Syndics' (1661); and among his prints, though no single ones may stand out in such conspicuous prominence, we may contrast the exquisite portrait of his mother (1628), the 'Burgomaster Six' (1647), and the 'St. Francis' (1657). Grouped around these works are others, varying in merit, which, whether dated or not, will, if earnestly and carefully studied, be seen to assume their proper order. Still I will not say that the task of thus arranging them is a simple one. It is rather the other way. It has been tried, and with very considerable success, by a countryman of the great master. Quite independently, I have myself made the attempt to draw up a chronological table of Rembrandt's prints, and I have had the satisfaction, when I came to compare my work, of finding how constantly my conclusions and his were in accord; but, as I have said, the task is not an easy one, nor can perfect success at one leap be attained—the exact position of many debatable paintings and prints may, perhaps, long remain unsettled. While I write, an instance occurs to me of the difficulties in our way. Among the priceless treasures in the Van Loon Collection at Amsterdam are the portraits on panel of Martin Daey and his wife. Two most able connoisseurs have given us exhaustive notes upon these pieces; and while one of them sees so striking a similarity in their style and execution that he is disposed to class them both in the same year—conceived, as he expresses it, almost in the same hour—the other, giving his opinion that the portrait of the husband, dated 1634, is executed closely after the manner of the 'Lesson in Anatomy,' everything in the style of the portrait coinciding with its date, argues that every known fact connected with the portrait of the wife as well as its execution coincides to fix its date about 1643—that is, about ten years later. And, though it is a much less formidable undertaking to arrange Rembrandt's prints in their order, there occasionally appear divergences of opinion among those best qualified to decide which will take some time to reconcile. As if to show how easily mistakes may be made, there is a sheet of sketches executed in 1632; after impressions were taken from the entire plate it was divided into two, and afterwards into five, and impressions taken from the several pieces: the figure engraved on one of these pieces, in the manner of its execution, bears so little resemblance to the other four that, while their place is undisturbed, this, in forgetfulness of its original position, has been classed among the works of a much later period.

In my attempt to draw up a chronological table of the Rembrandt prints, I have not overlooked the possible evidence which might be afforded by the varying forms of his signature. The following remarks show some of the results of this investigation, and in view of the general interest felt in these works of the master I need not apologise for offering them to my readers.

Rejecting the doubtful pieces (I do not stop to enquire how many more must be discarded), impressions from about 350 plates have been left to us: 152 of these have neither name nor date; 179, or more than half, are undated; 142 are signed 'Rembrandt,' the spelling sometimes slightly differing; 62 bear a monogram composed of the letters R. H.; in three the letter R. only appears.

It is somewhat singular that from the date of Gersaint's catalogue to the present time the great majority of writers have misread the monogram 'R. H.'; the letters have been almost invariably assumed to represent 'R t,' the first and last letters of Rembrandt's name.<sup>1</sup> I have heard other suggestions made as to the significance of these letters, for, as may naturally be supposed, they are not always very legible, but I have no doubt as to their invariable meaning. Rembrandt used the signa-

<sup>1</sup> This monogram, R<sub>t</sub>, is not always distinct; sometimes it more nearly resembles R t or even R L, but there can be no doubt what is its real significance.

ture which a Dutchman of his day would do—his grandfather was Gerrit Roelofssoon, his father was Harman Gerritssoon, and he, Rembrandt Harmanssoon. He formed a monogram of the first letters of his name, R. H., and on every work, painting, print, or drawing which he executed *during his father's lifetime*, and on which a signature appears, he made use of this monogram, and never, I believe, signed in any other way. Some of my readers who have not themselves thought the matter out, may regard this as a bold assertion. It certainly does seem, at first sight, somewhat improbable that a master like Rembrandt should, for any length of time, have confined himself to one particular form of signature. The Christian name he used later or the single initial would have seemed equally correct. That he did so restrict himself is what I propose to show, and that in all the works which came from his hand.

Rembrandt's earliest authentic painting is the 'St. Paul in Prison,' in the gallery at Stuttgart. I have not seen this work, so rely on the account given of it by Vosmaer. Upon the wall appears the monogram 'R. H.,' and the date 1627. So far, good; but—what at first appears to contradict my rule—upon an open book in front of the apostle is the inscription 'Rembrandt fecit.' When two signatures appear, it may generally be asserted that one was added at a later time. There is just such an instance in an etching to which I shall presently refer; and, if there is anything more than an accidental coincidence in a suggestion which must form the subject of another paper, there is presumptive evidence that some portion of the canvas was worked up by another hand. It can certainly never be proved that this second signature was placed there by Rembrandt in 1627; and I do not hesitate to disallow it. The next on my list is an admirable work on panel, at the Hague—the subject 'Susannah.' It is signed 'Rembrandt f,' and below are figures which have been read 1631; but the figure 1 is equally like a 7, and the writer whom I have just now quoted—and there is no higher authority on such matters—remarks on the similarity of style with the 'Lesson in Anatomy,' a picture which was not completed till the end of the year 1632, when Rembrandt ceased to sign with the monogram; this, then, does not prove an insurmountable exception to our rule. A third painting on panel, at Brunswick, is called a portrait of 'Hugo Grotius,' it is said to be signed and dated 'Rembrant f. 1631' (the letter 'd' omitted); this is the signature on the 'Lesson in Anatomy.' A further examination of this picture is desirable; closer investigation, I am led to believe, may throw doubts upon the picture itself, while I would suggest that to place a name and date upon a picture at a later time is a practice not entirely unknown. Still, for the present, I must let it pass as a possible exception, reminding my readers of the fact that of the fifteen paintings and drawings either dated, or from sufficient cause attributed to the years, 1630–31, nine only are signed, and these with the monogram R.H. In the year 1632 ten paintings by Rembrandt are signed R.H.—one only, the 'Lesson in Anatomy,' is signed 'Rembrant'—while not one single painting in any following year bears the monogram. It is true that in Vosmaer's list certain pictures have the inscription 'R.H. inventor V. Vliet, fec. 1634;' but this is not the date of Rembrandt's design or composition, but of its execution by Van Vliet. I shall refer again to these further on, and explain how it is that the 'Lesson in Anatomy' is signed 'Rembrant.'

The earliest of Rembrandt's prints are dated 1628. There are two of this year both bearing the monogram R.H.; with them I place a study for one of them—W. 369, Bl. 252. In 1629 are two prints signed R.H. In 1630 twenty of the twenty-seven belonging to this year have R.H.; one of them, W. 171, Bl. 136, appears in two states, and it is said that in the second state the name 'Rembrandt' is added. I give this on the authority of the catalogues. I have never met with this state, though I know twelve impressions of the first, and the fact of this second state not having found its way into the large collections gives reason for assuming that it belongs to a later date—as probably the re-work

which is said to distinguish it would prove. In the year 1631 Rembrandt engraved forty plates: twenty-nine have the R.H. The catalogues place 'The Bathers,' W. 192, in this year, as signed 'Rembrandt f 1631:' a reference to the impression shows that the 3 has been corrected to a 5. The alteration is in dry-point, and in the earliest impressions—I have seen fifteen—it shows the burr. We now come to the year 1632. There are fourteen plates this year (one of them, W. 360, afterwards divided into five): nine of these fourteen have the R.H.; two are unsigned; one has the signature 'Rembrandt;' two 'Rembrant,' without the d.

At and after this date Rembrandt entirely discarded the monogram, and when he signed his name, signed it in full, or, in three cases only among the prints, used the single initial R. I can speak positively as regards his prints—there is not one with a date after 1632 which bears the monogram. 'The Beggar accompanied by his Dog,' described by Bartsch, No. 175, signed 'R.H. 1651,' is not an exception, since it is not a Rembrandt at all, and among the paintings and drawings I have not been able to hear of one that is thus signed. True, a few have been described as bearing this monogram, which are attributed to a later year; they are widely scattered, and it is a significant fact that in every such case the writer who describes them himself suggests a doubt either as to the authenticity of the work or of the reading of the inscription.<sup>1</sup>

How, then, do we account for the change in the form of the signature in 1632? The explanation is a simple one. It was towards the end of this year that Rembrandt's father died. Eighteen of the master's works were finished before the date of his father's death. 'The Lesson in Anatomy,' begun some time before, was only completed after Harman's death. Two etchings only were added to Rembrandt's works before that year ended, and we seem to be witnessing the natural sorrow felt by the son when we find that one of these is 'A Saint in Prayer' (W. 106, Bl. 72), and the other, her features grave and sad, a dark veil covering her forehead, is the portrait of his mother clad in the sombre garments which tell of her widowhood (W. 340, Bl. 197).

I have still one objection to meet. In the catalogue of the works of Van Vliet appear the paintings to which I have before referred. I have never seen them, and do not know where they are to be found. I know four *prints* by V. Vliet—they are described by Bartsch, Nos. 19, 22, 23, 24, and inscribed 'R. H. inv., V. Vliet fec.'—but the date, as I have before said, only proves the execution of the designs, not the time when the designs left Rembrandt's hand. In speaking of them I may add that two, Nos. 21, 22, were very cleverly copied by an English engraver, Richard Gaywood, *circa* 1660. He has called them 'Heracitus' and 'Democritus;' they are upon one plate, and in the middle towards the top he has placed the monogram 'R. H. ;' the letters are very clearly executed, and cannot, in this case, be misunderstood.

## II.

May 26, 1877.

It may be in the recollection of some of the readers of the 'Academy,' that a paper on Rembrandt, to which my name was affixed, appeared on February 24 last, and that that paper was numbered I. No. I.

<sup>1</sup> A small sheet of sketches (W. 364, Bl. 288) bears the monogram R.H., and apparently the date 1651. It was placed among the works of 1651 in our Exhibition. A further careful comparison, however, convinces me that the date is 1631, and though the greater part of the work upon the plate is of the later date, this only proves what I have long held, that the designs upon these sheets of sketches were not all executed at one time; it is not improbable that some of these plates were laid aside and not even printed from until after the dispersion of Rembrandt's effects in 1656.

should have been followed by No. II., but, when it was represented to me that to enter at that time upon a critical examination of certain works of Rembrandt might possibly interfere even in a remote degree with the success of an Exhibition in which, as a member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, I was myself interested, I thought it right to ask the permission of the editor to postpone my papers. Now that the Exhibition is open, and a collection of the etched work of Rembrandt—such as surely has never been seen before, and may, perhaps, never be brought together again—adorns the walls of the gallery, the restriction which I placed upon myself is removed, and my notes may be put forward for the criticism of your readers. These notes will not now be offered in the shape in which they would have appeared, since with the Catalogue of the Exhibition is issued a Preface by one of our members, in which some of the ground which I proposed to occupy is taken up. The opinions expressed in that Preface will, from the known position of the writer, carry great weight, and, whether those opinions are accepted or controverted by experts in Rembrandt lore, all must admire the fearless way in which the writer has questioned the authenticity of the disputed works, and allow that he has not aroused a controversy without assigning reasons which, to say the least, are worthy of grave consideration.

The selection of Rembrandt etchings which has been made will be found to comprise some 200 pieces, representing about 170 subjects. A few only of the more important works are omitted, partly from the impossibility of obtaining the loan of the really finest impressions, and partly because wall-space is limited. Nearly all the Beggars, and most of the Fancy Heads and Academical Pieces, were intentionally refused. Their introduction was not necessary to the purpose of the Exhibition; but the works which have found a place will be seen to comprise nearly every important etching which came from Rembrandt's hand, as well as some of those whose authorship is questioned, but which for many reasons are so interesting that without them one object of the collection could not have been attained.

For the first time a large selection of Rembrandt's works is placed in what we believe to have been the order of execution. I have before spoken of the advantage which may be expected to result from such an arrangement, and though the idea of thus presenting these works is not a new one—it was proposed by Ottley and has been attempted by Vosmaer—yet it is certain that no such opportunity of *seeing* the works together in this order has yet been afforded, and equally certain that, now we have seen it, no new descriptive catalogue of Rembrandt can ever be satisfactory in which this chronological order is not made an important feature. Assuming that the arrangement of the several pieces is very nearly what it should be, we may make our general survey of the collection and note the lessons which it teaches.

The visitor who is least informed in the etched works of the master must remark how this order of their position illustrates the gradual change which came over his work. The earlier prints, however beautiful, are apparently utterly unlike the prints of his later days, so unlike that one might almost fancy that we were viewing the productions of a different hand—compare, for instance, No. 10, the bust of a grey-bearded man (W. 261, Bl. 281), with No. 199, the portrait of the elder Haaring (W. 276, Bl. 178), placed upon the screen; or No. 32, 'The Angel appearing to the Shepherds' (W. 49, Bl. 17), with No. 206, 'Our Lord on the Mount of Olives' (W. 79, Bl. 50)—and yet the gradations may be clearly traced from the highly-finished, delicate technic of the one, to the bold, effective execution of the other. This evidence of the gradual development of 'dry point' may be traced almost step by step. Dry point appears upon the master's earliest work, but the burr which it created, and which forms so important a feature of his later work, was not then suffered to remain. It would seem as if Rembrandt himself only by degrees became aware of the resources at his command. In his earliest time the free use of the scraper allowed the exquisitely delicate lines with which he

created his shadows to appear in their perfection. But as he progresses he gradually allows some little burr to remain upon his plate, and wherever it appears we feel, as he must have done, the effectiveness of the new power which was rising under his hand. See for instance, No. 45, 'A Young Man seated, with Expression of Quiet Meditation' (W. 270, Bl. 258): the effect of the little burr which is allowed to remain strikes us at once; it adds a richness and finish to a portrait which without it loses much of its charm. Or in No. 80, 'The Lion Hunt' (W. 118, Bl. 86), the few formless blots in the lower right give a vigour and life to the whole scene which without them is comparatively cold and dull. And then pass to the exquisite compositions of his later time—the 'Three Cottages,' for instance (129), (W. 214, Bl. 318), exhibiting, thanks to the burr, a brilliancy and tone which cannot be surpassed. Or study the marvellous results of burr in that large and solemn picture of the Lord upon the Cross, Nos. 191–92, surely the grandest of all the works of this class which have been preserved to us (W. 81, Bl. 53).

But not only does the chronological arrangement reveal the slowly varying technic of the master, it opens to us something of the life-history of the artist himself. In his earliest time he gives us studies of himself, not so much portraits as studies of feature and expression. He etches, in different attitudes, the portrait of his mother—the final one in widow's weeds for the death of her husband, Harman Gerritszoon, after which, as I have before shown, he discarded the monogram which he had till now used, and signed his name in full. His father—have we any likeness of him? Can that finely-finished work, No. 15 (W. 264, Bl. 276), be intended for his portrait? The size of the plate makes it a pendant to a portrait of his mother, and the apparent age of the handsome old man, picturesque in a Jewish dress, would suit what we believe to have been the age of Harman. A little later he gives us some lovely sketches of his young wife, Saskia, 38, 44 (W. 359–61, Bl. 249–50). In 39 we see her seated by himself. Again we have his own portrait fancifully attired, 48, 52 (W. 20–1, Bl. 233–34)—not a shadow of a care is yet seen upon his face. We fancy we see a man full of strong domestic affection, of a happy disposition, possessing and enjoying many of the good things of life—surely not the sordid avaricious man such as Houbraken would have us believe, but spending his money liberally in works of art, and happiest in the love of his mother and the society of his charming wife. But pass onwards; we have another portrait of Saskia, No. 90 (W. 353, Bl. 202)—it is the last—we see her in the illness which preceded her death. If the Cassel portrait, so beautifully engraved by Unger, is a faithful likeness, the etchings have hardly done her justice; but even with these the change in feature in this little etching is indescribably touching. Later he gives us another portrait of himself: the fanciful dress and feathered cap which he before affected are laid aside; he appears now in sober coat and hat, a quiet unpretending burgher, his features grave as are those of middle age when, as is too often the case, the poetry of life is gone.

But yet another thought must strike the observer. The history of the time when the Dutch School arose is a history of one of the most stirring periods in the life of any nation; yet Rembrandt, like nearly all the artists of Holland who preceded or immediately followed him, gives no sign in his works, or hardly any, of a cognisance of events almost without parallel in the world's history. The struggle for religious and political independence through which the States had passed had had its effect, and it is interesting to note how the practical and unimaginative character of the people, their rigid adherence to the sterner facts of life, appears even in their Art. But why one and all the great masters who founded so thoroughly a self-contained School should seem to have studiously avoided picturing the recent or present history of their country is a mystery we cannot solve. The subject has been well handled by Fromentin in an essay upon the School, which will repay perusal. A collection like the one before us is a fitting illustration. The life of Barneveld had closed in 1620; some whispers of the treason which led his sons to the scaffold in 1623 must, we think, have been heard; Holland had still

a long struggle before her to preserve her hardly-earned liberty; a few years later Van Tromp's victories must have stirred the hearts of his countrymen and roused emotions even in the calmest breasts. Yet where in all the master's works is there evidence that there ever reached him even the faintest echo of the strife? One etching alone of all he has left can in any way be made to refer to the history of the time, and it is very doubtful what that etching is meant to illustrate.<sup>1</sup> With this single exception, the whole of Rembrandt's works are of scenes of rustic tranquillity, quiet landscapes, owing nothing to the living objects so sparingly introduced; or are portraits, not of patriots or warriors, men who devoted themselves for their country or their faith, but of peaceful burghers—the advocate, the writing-master, the jeweller, the printseller, or the burgomaster whose literary tastes find vent in composing a tragedy founded on old-world fable. Rembrandt cannot be said to be wanting in imagination, but he devoted it to the expression of Scripture scenes. When he descends to design from common life he gives us Beggars, or the Jews, picturesque in their dirty raggedness, who haunted the quarter where he lived. But landscape, or portrait, or beggar, all the life he saw was peaceful; his representations of it, but for his powerful genius, would have been tame and monotonous. Events, excepting of the quietest home life, seemed to have passed him by; aerial storms alone disturbed the tranquillity, and his lot, if we judged only from his works, might have been cast in days of uneventful and unbroken peace.

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### III.

June 2, 1877.

I must preface this paper by a few further words of introduction to the Exhibition in the Gallery of the Burlington Fine Arts Club. The prints are arranged, as has been said, in what is believed to have been the order of their execution. Upon each is placed a label on which is the title and number according to Wilson, and in italics the title and number of Charles Blanc. The 'state' described is always that of Wilson. The word 'state,' *état*, has been made use of by all who have written on Rembrandt as a convenient term to designate the order, as far as it can be ascertained, in which the impressions of a plate have been printed. The differences or distinctive marks which tell of this order are often very trifling. In some cases the so-called 'state' is really only a trial proof of the unfinished work; in other cases it tells of a mere correction of an error, or even the removal of an accidental scratch or mark on the plate; but, wherever used, the term implies only that there is some variation in the plate. Many of these variations are interesting from an artistic point of view; sometimes they are only interesting in a commercial sense. Still, as some word must be used, and this word 'state' has by common consent been employed, it is as well to retain it. The student will find some very sensible remarks on 'states' in Dr. Willshire's 'Introduction to the Study and Collection of Ancient Prints,' a book which I cannot recommend too strongly to all who desire an acquaintance with these works of the Old Masters.

In a preface to the Catalogue written by Mr. Seymour Haden, a very interesting question has been raised as to what extent some of the prints usually attributed to Rembrandt are by his hand—a question which will, I hope, be fairly and exhaustively considered by amateurs. Mr. Haden's remarks are well worthy of attention: for them I must refer your readers to the Preface itself. In some instances my conclusions will be found at variance with those he has expressed. I recognise the full force of the arguments he has so ably put forward, but as I have made my own notes independently, and most of them long before I was aware of his views, I do not hesitate to offer them as a contribution towards the settlement of the question.

<sup>1</sup> An allegorical piece, Wilson, 114. *Le Tombeau allégorique*, Blanc, 80.

The limits to which I am necessarily restricted render it impossible for me to do more than direct attention to a few of the prints in the gallery, and as those whose authenticity is disputed are for our present purpose the most important, I shall generally confine my criticisms to them—regretting that want of space compels me to pass by unnoticed so many exquisite examples of Rembrandt's work.

I begin with No. 7 (W. 7, Bl. 211). We have here a beautifully executed portrait of Rembrandt himself. The bust of the two lower impressions placed in the same frame I do not regard as Rembrandt's work, but attribute it to Van Vliet, who has left us a reproduction of the eighth state, dated 1634, on a smaller plate, a piece which has frequently passed for the work of the master. The head only of No. 7 is by Rembrandt, and it would seem that he retained impressions of this head to which at some later time he added the collar and bust in pencil. Three impressions thus worked on are known, and on two of them there is the name and age with the date in Rembrandt's hand, thus settling the disputed point as to the year of his birth. On this consult Vosmaer, *Rembrandt . . . ses Précurseurs*, &c., p. ix., &c. No. 15 (W. 264, Bl. 270): I have before suggested that this is a portrait of Rembrandt's father. There are four portraits of old men, unnamed, among the paintings of Rembrandt executed at this time; they are all from the same model; it would be interesting to learn whether they in any way resemble this. The P. Mariette who has placed his name and date on the print was a collector. Impressions where this signature appears are always to be preferred, since Mariette is never known to have placed his name upon a bad impression.

Pass on to No. 16—'The Descent from the Cross' (W. 84, Bl. 56). Two prints on plates of very nearly the same size bear this title. The first was so gravely injured by some accidental exposure to the acid that a great part of the work disappeared, and only three impressions of this injured plate are known to have been struck off. In the Catalogue is given a reproduction of part of the work from this injured print, and a corresponding part is reproduced from No. 16. In the 'Abecedario' of P. J. Mariette, which with other unedited notes was republished in Paris in 1857, there is a remark upon this plate to the effect that the harsh work with the burin was not by the hand of Rembrandt (tom. iv. 351–52). Mr. Haden draws attention to the dissimilarity in the execution of the two pieces, and urges that, while the first was done by a master, the print before us is the inferior work of a scholar. But even without the comparison the technic in much of No. 16 should be conclusive—the engraver's work upon the sky, the woodenness of the rays of light which proceed from the upper right, and the weak purposeless lines which fill the background, were surely never done by Rembrandt.

But was Lievens the scholar in this instance? I venture to think that he was not; and, as I find myself entertaining an opposite view to that expressed in the Preface, I must give the reasons for my opinion. Jan Lievens, born in 1607 at Leyden, was with Rembrandt a pupil of Lastman. It was in the year 1630 that Rembrandt took a house in Amsterdam. Descamp tells us of Lievens that by the time he was eighteen he had established his reputation as a portrait-painter, and that in 1630 he visited England; that he remained in England three years, and that in 1634 he married and settled in Antwerp, where he painted several altar-pieces for the churches of the Low Countries, and that he did not return at all to Holland until 1641. I do not think that the first plate of the 'Descent from the Cross,' Rembrandt's original, could have been executed much earlier than 1633, certainly not before 1630, while Rembrandt and Lievens were together at Leyden. The second plate bears the date 1633, but of course may have been executed later. But on the third state of this print is the inscription of Uylenburg, Rembrandt's nephew by marriage, an Amsterdam printer, through whose hands the print was given to the trade. This would perhaps have been in 1634 or 1635, at a time when Lievens could not possibly have been with Rembrandt, since at that time and for six years later he was earning

profit and reputation elsewhere. Lievens' manner after 1641, when he returned to Holland, was so far in advance of the technic in this piece that we are precluded from assuming that it was executed then; besides, we have no evidence of his having worked under Rembrandt after 1641, any more than we have proof of his having worked for him at any time, even while they were both together at Leyden. Turn now to 'The Oriental Heads,' which bear the date 1635. There are three prints attributed to Rembrandt which bear this name: two are exhibited (W. 288-290, Bl. 173-289); there is also a head of a young man (not exhibited, W. 291), and the bust (W. 292, Bl. 286). It is hard to discover in any of these heads the undoubted work of Rembrandt, but there is a very great similarity to the work of Lievens. The generally received opinion has been that all these prints were executed by Rembrandt, and that similar heads attributed to Lievens are reproductions or copies. Of *the first head*, No. 36, there is a reproduction by Lievens: it is found in two states; on one of them is Lievens' initial, L. *The second head*, not exhibited, is reproduced three times: one is in the same direction, with Lievens' initial, as well as the name of Rembrandt, but without the enigmatical word which follows; another in reverse with Lievens' initial; the third, also in reverse, on a smaller plate. *The third head* he has copied in the same direction with some differences in the enigmatical word. He has also reproduced the head of the young man (W. 291, Bl. 255), in reverse, and to this he has put his name, Lievens. Which are the originals, and which are the copies? And if Lievens was the copyist, was he with Rembrandt when he executed them? The three Orientals are evident studies from the same head; the first has been styled a portrait of Jacob Cats, tutor to William, Prince of Orange, and there is certainly a resemblance in this print to the portrait of Jacob Cats, executed by Flinck, and engraved by Schmidt; but there is also in the gallery at Amsterdam a portrait of Jacob Cats, taken by Mireveldt in 1634, engraved by Delff, which bears no resemblance either to this print or to Flinck's picture. I believe that the original of 'The Oriental Heads' was simply a model who attended Lievens' studio at Antwerp; and what makes this the more probable is that Lievens made use of him again certainly three times, while there is no undoubted print of Rembrandt in which he again appears. My suggestion is that Lievens' plates were the original ones; that the 'retouched' heads are Rembrandt's copies of Lievens' work; that he has closely imitated in them the manner of Lievens, and that the mysterious scrawl which follows his name was added to mark them as being to a certain extent his own; but that they afford no proof that Rembrandt and Lievens were at this time working together—it would rather seem that these were prints exchanged between two artists, who had been fellow-pupils, and were ready each to acknowledge the other's merits. The conclusion, therefore, to which I have come is that we have no proof in any one of these pieces that Lievens was at any time Rembrandt's scholar, or, except when in Lastman's studio, even a fellow-worker with him. If Lievens executed the work in No. 16, it must have been while they were at Leyden, before the year 1630. This would place the injured plate (W. 83) too early in Rembrandt's career; if we postpone the execution of No. 16 (W. 84) to a later date, say 1641-42, we are met by the objections that it does not compare with Lievens' at that time, and we cannot assume that the plate was executed away from Amsterdam, since the inscription of Uylenburg shows that it was published there. I think, therefore, with all deference to other opinion, we must attribute the doubtful work to some other hand. I confess myself as yet at a loss to whom to ascribe it, and do not now even offer a suggestion.

No. 18 is 'The Resurrection of Lazarus' (W. 77, Bl. 48). Vosmaer, speaking of Jan de Wedt—or Wet, as he sometimes signs himself—says that if the picture of this subject by him is rightly dated 1633, we have a valuable date, for that was about the time when Rembrandt executed his 'Resurrection of Lazarus.' Thus we have the concurrence of Vosmaer in assigning this piece to 1633. Ten or more states of this print are known. It is a fine composition, though far inferior to the lovely little



'Resurrection of Lazarus,' No. 82 (W. 76, Bl. 47). There is much dignity in the attitude of the principal figure, though the religious element is somewhat wanting; as Charles Blanc observes, it is as if Rembrandt sought to represent the miracle of Christ as the marvellous effect of superhuman magnetism—of a sublime incantation (vol. i. p. 170). But the piece, though possessed of considerable merit, in no way deserves the praise which has been lavished upon it. I do not deny that there is something impressive in the attitude of the principal figure, and that the general composition is highly artistic; but surely there is no print among all those attributed to Rembrandt in which there is so much to criticise. The forms and actions of the figures which surround the tomb, or are in shadow to the left, are singularly awkward and ill-drawn—their features are almost repulsive, their limbs, the hands especially, are clumsy and distorted; the technic, again, is not that of Rembrandt, and varies from somewhat coarse undecided work to work which is both tediously minute and ineffective. There is in the British Museum a third state of this print, upon which some bold pencil-work appears partly covering the figure of the woman to the right at the foot of the grave; similar pencil-work is also seen at the back of the impression. In this state the woman is leaning backwards; the pencil-work is an evident correction of design, but it is an indication of an improvement, not a drawing to be copied. In the fourth state the design is carried out, and the woman leans forward. It looks as if a pupil had been supplied with a correction, which he was carrying out under the master's eye. Other alterations take place: one woman's mouth—the woman with outstretched arms in the background—is absurdly large; it is reduced to moderate dimensions: there is a want of relief in the shading of the group to the left; the burnisher is resorted to: too great uniformity in the shading elsewhere is corrected by dry point—throughout, until the plate becomes too far worn for further experiment, we perceive the work of the scholar and the directions of the master. But who was this scholar?

At this time Jan Van Vliet was working in Rembrandt's studio. He was not a pupil in the true sense of the word, since we find him affixing his own name to his pieces as one free of the guild. He had shortly before designed and executed a 'Resurrection of Lazarus': it is a piece painful to contemplate; it is Van Vliet at his worst. We can imagine the contempt with which Rembrandt would regard it; but he liked the artist, and he saw there were better things in him than such a print would seem to warrant, so he furnished him with designs and directed him in their execution. The result is a 'St. Jerome' on which the scholar, in addition to his own name, puts 'R H van Rijn inv.,' and the date, 1631. This 'St. Jerome' is one of Van Vliet's best works, and is both highly finished and effective, and to some extent deserves the encomiums passed upon it by Bartsch; but it presents exactly the difference in technic which we see in the 'Resurrection of Lazarus,' the piece which we are criticising. The success of the scholar, for the 'St. Jerome' is a success, was hopeful. Other more elaborate designs are furnished—among these one for this 'Resurrection of Lazarus'; and, as an encouragement, Rembrandt himself executed some of the work upon the copper. The design so commenced Van Vliet set himself to carry out; but, true to his unfortunate instincts, he could not escape his tendency to exaggeration—the strained attitude, the ungainly limbs, the claw-like hands, and the distorted features, are all his own. Thus, while we recognise the genius of Rembrandt in the composition of the piece, and can see some of his work in the execution, the greater part must be attributed to the scholar. But, further, I compare this piece with a smaller print—not here exhibited, but well known—under the title of 'Jacob Lamenting the Supposed Death of Joseph' (W. 42, Bl. 10). This piece has been copied 'very deceptively.' I believe that the *copy* is Van Vliet's original work, and the so-called Rembrandt is Van Vliet's repetition of it on another plate after the first had been subjected to the criticism of Rembrandt. However this may be, the same faults which we see in the large 'Resurrection of Lazarus' are repeated. There is similar exaggeration in features and action,

and a like contrast in technic, though not in such a marked degree. Is it more than a coincidence that this piece is also inscribed with the 'Van Rijn'? Van Vliet has left us about ninety pieces: the greater part were both designed and executed by himself, and as a rule are hopelessly bad; but twelve are after designs by Rembrandt. It is curious that on six of these twelve there is the inscription 'Van Rijn'; four of these six are dated 1631; one is dated 1633, and one undated belongs to that year. The use of 'Van Rijn' by Rembrandt himself was unusual. I have been at some pains to discover how often it occurs either on his own works or on those of his school. It is found only on two of the etchings—the two we are considering. Van Rijn appears on one painting by Rembrandt in the Louvre. It is not seen on any of those in the National Gallery. It was on one, No. 59, in the Winter Exhibition at the Royal Academy. It is seen on a portrait of Coppenol at Cassel, and on a few others—not more than twelve or fifteen at the most; and in some of these it is a question whether the work of another hand does not appear. No one of Rembrandt's school used the Van Rijn except Van Vliet; and just as Rembrandt himself never used it except in his earliest time, so Van Vliet never uses it after 1633. On the six pieces executed in 1634 he puts 'R H inv.' with his own signature.

The conclusion I have come to, therefore, is that in this 'Resurrection of Lazarus,' as well as in the 'Jacob Lamenting,' we have the design of Rembrandt, and probably some part of the execution is his, but that the greater part of what we see is the work of Van Vliet. And in answer to the objection that in the 'Resurrection' there is work far beyond anything of which Van Vliet was capable, I refer the student, not to the long list of nearly worthless prints which Vliet has left us, among which are compositions in which I have hardly found one single redeeming feature (I know them well, for I have laboriously indexed them all)—I refer him to the few prints which were executed under Rembrandt's supervision, and which are of so much greater merit that it is difficult to conceive how they came to be executed by the same hand.

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#### IV.

*June 9, 1877.*

I must begin this paper with the correction of an error. In my last paper, remarking on the use of 'Van Rijn' in Rembrandt's time, I had forgotten a 'St. Anastatius' by P. de Baillu, with the inscription 'Rembrandt van Rijn inv.' It is not impossible that others have been overlooked.

No. 19 is 'The Good Samaritan' (W. 95, Bl. 41). Mr. Haden attributes the plate to Bol, and, if I rightly understand him, allots no part of it to Rembrandt. I cannot go with him so far as this, because I think I see in it evidence of the master's hand as well as that of the pupil. It is unfortunate that we have no signed engraving by Bol earlier than 1639. At the time this 'Good Samaritan' was etched Bol was a pupil, and so did not affix his own name to his compositions; we are, therefore, unable to compare this piece with any undoubted work of his executed at the time, and can only surmise from an examination of his later manner what would have been his technic then. That this comparison does to some degree help us is, I think, undoubted: there is a certain minuteness of detail in Bol's earlier signed works which bears a greater resemblance to the technic in this and some other pieces than it does to the handling of Rembrandt. But, first, as to the design of 'The Good Samaritan': Vosmaer, p. 38, suggests that the idea was borrowed from a print by Jan van der Velde, signed by him but not dated. Jan van der Velde was born in 1598, and was one of the few artists of the Dutch

School who pictured military scenes. We have from him a small series representing Spanish troops marching in the Low Countries in 1638-41-45; they are after Jacob Martin de Jonge. His print of 'The Good Samaritan' varies from the one we are considering in that it is a night scene, and the Good Samaritan and the host are represented at the bottom of the steps instead of the top. I assume that this No. 19 was designed and partly executed by Rembrandt, and that it was placed in the hands of a pupil for completion. For the workmanship compare it with No. 24, the 'St. Jerome' (W. 105, Bl. 71). Here we have a resemblance to the work of Bol in design as well as technic—a resemblance more striking than is seen in any part of 'The Good Samaritan' (remark the drawing of a lion by Rembrandt, placed in the same frame, so infinitely superior to the heraldic animal which is seen in the foreground of the 'St. Jerome.'

The amateur should also acquaint himself with another so-called Rembrandt, not exhibited (W. 57, Bl. 25), called a 'Flight into Egypt.' It is a print designed by Rembrandt; the Virgin carrying the Holy Child closely wrapped in her mantle, is seated on an ass, and though we cannot but admire the struggles of the heavily-laden animal to ascend the rising ground up which Joseph is leading it, yet when we compare the mechanical neatness of the technic and the formal foliage with that seen in parts of the 'Good Samaritan,' we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that this 'Flight' and the 'Good Samaritan' owe a large part of their execution to the same hand. I wish the print had been hung in the gallery, that the student might compare them. There is a point of less importance which may yet be noted, that both this piece and the 'Good Samaritan' are alike in their signature. The inscription on each is 'Rembrandt inventor et fecit;' it is a curious coincidence even if it is nothing more. Still, whatever criticisms may be passed upon the 'Good Samaritan,' I think we have in it much that reminds us of the genius of Rembrandt: the features of the host, for instance, taking his instructions as to the care of the wounded man; the face of the traveller himself recounting to the person at the window the perils through which he has passed; and even the little scene in the background, the woman drawing water from the well, are more in manner of the master than of the scholar. So, whatever doubt we may feel regarding certain parts of the print, we need not, I think, refuse to see in it evidences of Rembrandt's work; nor should we forget that it is of his earliest time, or reject it because it does not show the genius apparent in later work. Even Homer sometimes slept, and Rembrandt may not at all times have been equal to himself. No. 10, 'Head of an Old Man' (W. 261, Bl. 281), which has been ascribed to Bol, will, perhaps, be more readily attributed to the pupil. But the question is not free from difficulty. There are four very similar Heads (W. 293, 310, 316, 323), on which Rembrandt's monogram, and on three of them the date, appears. Bol's earliest work, not described, is signed in rather stronger characters than he generally uses, 'F. Bol. f. 1639.' In it is represented an old man seated at a table with a bowl of bread before him, over which he holds his hands as if invoking a blessing. If this print is really by Bol, and it will compare very closely with his other early work, we have an example of his manner at that time; its execution is certainly inferior to that in the Head No. 10, and in the others referred to. In 1642-43, Bol's execution has become much more like that of Rembrandt, and in these years he several times reproduces the Heads No. 10, &c., though I cannot say that he equals them. If, then, it is decided that this No. 10 and the similar Heads are by Bol, we must first reject the signatures and dates which appear upon them, and must then place the prints ten years later, a time when Bol was signing his own name; and finally explain why Bol permitted a misleading monogram and date upon some of his best prints. I am myself unwilling to attribute these Heads to any but Rembrandt. That the Head No. 10 is unlike much of Rembrandt's work at this date does not necessarily prove that it is not by his hand. There are like discrepancies in his work at other times. See, for instance, the 'Three Oriental Figures,' exhibited at No. 78 (W.

122, Bl. 7), which will not compare with any of Rembrandt's dated prints at that time, and which may or may not be his. Nay, we need go no further than the 'Rembrandt with a Scarf,' No. 17 (W. 17, Bl. 229), for unlikeness to the work of the master at the same date, 1633.

Let us now turn to the exquisite portrait called 'Rembrandt in an Oval,' No. 25 (W. 23, Bl. 232). The first state of this portrait, besides being a print of the greatest beauty, is also excessively rare, so rare that only four impressions, I believe, are known. Until Charles Blanc (vol. ii., p. 179) pointed out some important differences in this head from the received portraits of Rembrandt, noting especially the presence of the wart upon the face in this No. 25, it was always considered to be a likeness of Rembrandt himself. M. Blanc's suggestion is that it is a portrait of Prince Adolphus of Gueldres. There is a picture at Berlin which is assumed to be a portrait of this Prince Adolphus, signed 'Rembrandt, 1639.' He is represented in an angry mood, with clenched fist threatening his father, who looks out in fear from his prison window. The composition has also been designated 'Samson threatening Manoah.' Probably it is as much a likeness of Samson as it is of Prince Adolphus. I cannot learn that any authentic portrait of the Prince exists from which it could have been taken; and as Adolphus, whose unfilial conduct fills some seventy folio pages in the 'Historia Gelrica' of Pontanus, died in 1477, it is clear that Rembrandt did not take this portrait from the life.<sup>1</sup> The picture has been engraved by Schmidt—and there is an outline drawing in Kugler's 'Handboek,' which is more easily available for comparison, though of course much inferior to Schmidt's engraving. Comparing the 'Prince Adolphus' with this etching (No. 25), we see more points of resemblance than of difference; there is great similarity in the hair, in the forehead, the nose, and—remembering the widely different expressions—in the mouth; the similarity extends to the dress, it is seen in the loosely fitting coat, braided and fastened in front and confined at the waist with a sash, in the character of the sword, and in the ring depending from the ear. It is possible that the almond-shaped eyes in the etching could hardly have enlarged to the angrily opened orbit of the other; but enough remains to show that the sitter in both cases was the same, and whoever that sitter may have been, it was not the artist himself, nor was it any humble model who may have attended his studio. Let me commend the investigation to amateurs. I myself have not yet discovered anything in the history of the time, from 1634 to 1639, which can give a clue to the original.

But whose is the portrait of which such perfect impressions are exhibited under the name of 'The Great Jewish Bride,' No. 26 (W. 337, Bl. 199)? Here we have indeed a work of marvellous beauty. Of this it has been well observed:—

'The quality of the hair is best seen in the early states of the print. There, too, the light is natural, the inspiration direct. Thus far the piece has been done at a sitting. In the finished picture the light is a studio light, and the work, while very vigorous and artistic, lacks the particular delightfulness of a sudden transcript from nature and the life.'<sup>2</sup>

That this is a likeness of Saskia, Rembrandt's wife, is an opinion so generally received that I hardly dare suggest the possibility of an error. It was Charles Blanc who first, I believe, recognised in this Jewish Bride the portrait of Saskia Uylenburg; and he describes an original painting by Rembrandt, engraved by Haid, to which Smith in his catalogue gives the name of 'Bathsheba,' and of which Blanc considers this portrait is a reproduction. We do not know when the name 'The Jewish Bride,' was given to the piece, or what ground there may have been for the assumption that the lady was a

<sup>1</sup> If the reader desires to know more than the picture reveals about Duke Arnold and his promising son, and objects, as he naturally may do, to seek his information in the ponderous folio of Pontanus, he will find the tale partly told in Lord Albemarle's *Fifty Years of My Life* (London, 1876), vol. i. pp. 14, &c.

<sup>2</sup> See an article on *Masters of Etching*, by Frederick Wedmore. *Macmillan*, No. 176 (June, 1874).

daughter of Ephraim Bonus, the Jewish physician. I have compared it, not only with the etchings which are allowed to be studies of Rembrandt's wife—No. 30, to which it bears a close resemblance, and Nos. 38, 39, 44, 54, from all of which it varies in a greater or less degree—but also with other known portraits of Saskia. The bride in the 'The Marriage of Rembrandt' is certainly unlike this: the Cassel picture, engraved in Rembrandt's own time by Peter Leeuw and recently by Unger, taken, it is said, immediately after his marriage; the Antwerp picture, of which a very fine photograph appears in Bürger's folio; the portrait of Rembrandt's wife seated on his knee; and also another portrait engraved by Leeuw, on which is inscribed in ink as old as the paper itself that 'this is the wife of Rembrandt van Rijn (de huisvrouw van Rembrandt van Rijn),' bear only a faint resemblance to the 'Great Jewish Bride.' On the other hand, there are studies which recall it. Thus the queenly figure in the 'Feast of Ahasuerus,' engraved by Schmidt, is an evident reproduction. The conclusion I come to is that Saskia was the model for this etching, but that it is an idealised study and not a portrait, and it must be confessed that Rembrandt's genius did not lie in accuracy of likeness. The features of the Burgomaster Bonus and Lutma present considerable variation when treated by other hands; nay, the first-named has varied under the hand of Rembrandt himself, and we know how Captain Kock's portrait in the 'Night Watch' gave the Captain so little satisfaction that he immediately caused himself to be repainted by Helst.

No. 29, 'Jesus Driving out the Money-Changers' (W. 73, Bl. 44), is chiefly interesting from the fact, first noticed by Zani, that the figure of our Saviour is copied in reverse from a similar scene in the 'Little Passion' of Albert Dürer. It was very seldom that Rembrandt copied or borrowed from another. In a very charming little print, a 'Holy Family,' not exhibited (W. 66, Bl. 33), he seems to have been inspired by an Italian model. In some of his backgrounds he follows, or imitates Titian (see 122, 136, 180, 203); but actual copies of the design or figures of another master are with him so rare that they are the more noticeable when they do occur. The two impressions of 'The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds' (W. 49, Bl. 17) are of singular excellence, and should be carefully studied; the print, originally a pure etching, is brought up to its present beautiful effect with dry point. Govaert Flinck, one of Rembrandt's pupils, has made use of this composition in depicting a similar scene, closely imitating some of the figures and foliage, in which we can trace a similarity to Lastman. Flinck's picture, now in the Louvre, is probably his finest work; it has been engraved by Longhi. No. 40, 'The Prodigal Son' (W. 96, Bl. 43), should not be passed by. It is not by any means a rare print; but for composition, feeling, and execution, there are few which, I think, surpass it.

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V.

June 23, 1877.

WE now come to the important, but much criticised, print, Nos. 41-2, the 'Ecce Homo' (W. 82, Bl. 52). Although this print has always been ascribed to Rembrandt, and, until the remarks upon it in the Preface to the Catalogue of the present Exhibition appeared, no writer, so far as I know, has directly expressed his doubts of its authenticity, more than one competent critic has spoken of it in terms which would lead us to believe that he was not satisfied whether to attribute the whole of the execution to Rembrandt or to some inferior artist.

Josi is said to have first raised the question, and Mr. Carpenter, the late Keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, pointed out to me many years ago, in one of my earlier visits to the Print Room,

certain details which he believed to be by another hand; but in criticising the execution of the etching we must not lose sight of the great beauty of the composition, or pass judgment upon the whole because we are dissatisfied with the treatment in certain points. It may be interesting to quote a passage from Fuseli upon this print. He describes it as—

‘A composition which, though complete, hides in its grandeur the limits of its scenery; its form is a pyramid, whose top is lost in the sky, and its base in tumultuous murky waves. From the fluctuating crowds who inundate the base of the tribunal we rise to Pilate, surrounded and perplexed by the varied ferocity of the sanguinary synod to whose remorseless gripe he surrenders his ward, and from him we ascend to the sublime resignation of innocence in Christ, and, regardless of the roar, securely repose on His countenance. Such is the grandeur of a conception which in its blaze absorbs the abominable details of materials too vulgar to be mentioned. Had the materials been equal to the conception and composition, the “Ecce Homo” of Rembrandt, even unsupported by the magic of its light and shade, or his spell of colour, would have been an assemblage of superhuman power.’

Between the two prints exhibited is placed the ‘Grisaille’ described by Smith, and kindly lent by Lady Eastlake. This picture was apparently unknown to Bartsch and others who have compiled catalogues of Rembrandt’s etchings. It has not always been entirely above suspicion: probably the evidence of later work upon the central group has occasioned some hesitation in accepting it—a hesitation which is said to have been felt on its appearance at Mr. Harman’s sale in 1844, when it was acquired by Sir Charles Eastlake for 107 guineas. The consensus of opinion of those best qualified to judge is in its favour—an opinion in which I heartily coincide. The figure of Christ, and among others that of the man to His left, the admirable effect of many of the details—instance the treatment of the canopy and curtain, the bust of the Emperor upon the pillar, and the indication of the crowd below, &c.—even the central group, overlaid as it is with recent work, are sufficient, I think, to convince us that we have here the actual composition of the master. The additional work on the central group is much more recent, and was probably executed by some artist who had a finished impression of the etching before him as his model. We must all regret that this magnificent design was not allowed to remain as Rembrandt left it. The etching, taken directly upon the copper, is of course printed in reverse. It exists in five states, and, as the variations in these states are of importance in forming an opinion, I shall describe them in their order. *The first state*, of which only three impressions are known, is unfinished; the whole of the figures forming the central group are wanting (see reduced copy, Plate 4, in Preface). The canopy above the judgment-seat is in this impression carried half across the plate, as it is in the *Grisaille*, but instead of being kept down by colour is only partially shaded, and produces a very inartistic effect. The sky to the upper left is not entirely worked over, the scene below is too uniform in tone, and the light, instead of falling in one mass upon the central and more important part of the composition, as in the *Grisaille*, is diffused and weakened. A duplicate impression of this state in the British Museum, infinitely precious, shows the bold corrections of the master’s hand. Half the canopy is blotted out, the folds of the curtain are deepened in shadow, and the lights in the left and foreground are similarly lowered. The corrections so powerfully indicated are followed in the *second state*—but only imperfectly—the front part of the canopy is worked over, yet too many of its traces allowed to remain, and the shadows elsewhere are insufficiently introduced, while the sky, which in the first state was apparently executed by Rembrandt himself, is now covered with coarse purposeless strokes. The central group now also appears. In this state, which has not hitherto been described, and of which impressions are very rare, a mistake is made in following out the design which shows that an inferior artist was at work. It is not easy to make this clear by a verbal description—a comparison of the states would show it at once. Among the Jews, in the *Grisaille*,

surrounding Pilate, is a repulsive bearded figure in a coarse cap, his head immediately below, and partly concealing, the figure of the Saviour, the side of his face hidden by the outstretched hand of the man to his left. The cap of this first man is made to extend backward until it touches the second head. If the line of this cap is continued beyond the second head, it will be seen to coincide with the upper outline of the arm of this second man ending in a clenched hand. This hand and the extension of the arm could not by any possibility belong to the first man, whose left hand is seen below in the act of plucking Pilate's robe. In the second state of the etching, which, as I have said, has not previously been described, the copyist has reproduced this backward extension of the cap of the first head, but, by a mistake which proves that he did not understand the design and had not given any sufficient attention to the drawing of the group before him, he has shaded this hinder part of the cap and the extension of the arm beyond the second head by similar diagonal lines, and so the whole becomes an arm of preposterous length, and the hand seen below, holding Pilate's robe, is not accounted for. In the *third state* this absurd error is corrected; and, as will be seen by comparing the etchings exhibited with the *Grisaille*, the part between the two heads is filled in with shadow. The only alteration of any consequence which marks the next, the *fourth state* (the third of Wilson), is in the presence of diagonal lines across the face of the second figure above described, intended, probably, to lower its prominence. In the *fifth* the plate has been worn and re-worked, and bears the address of the publisher Malboure.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion, therefore, to which we may fairly come, is that the *Grisaille*, of course excepting the added work, is by the master; that the etching taken from it, though it shows many evidences of Rembrandt's hand, is a copy by some pupil or assistant who, working in the studio of the master, and under his continued supervision, more than once showed himself unequal to the task of translating the magnificent composition placed before him; that, as the work proceeded, Rembrandt corrected its errors and himself handled the needle—himself certainly working upon some parts of the central group and the figure of the Saviour. Whether my conclusion will be accepted I cannot say, but, with some knowledge of what is termed 'the school' of Rembrandt, I am entirely unable to attribute to any but himself much of the drawing and technic in this print. That in many places it is far below what his genius could accomplish is painfully evident. See, for instance, the figure to the left with outstretched hand. And see, too, some of the heads in the left foreground. But, closing one's eyes to these defects, take the central pyramidal group; shut out all the rest of the plate; look at it as if executed *en vignette*; I feel assured that if this fragment and no other part of the print had been known, we should scarcely have cared to notice the imperfections of the technic, or enquired what other hand had touched the plate.

But to whom shall we assign the inferior work apparent in this print? We are referred to Lievens. In my paper of June 2 I entered at some length into the reasons which induced me to question whether Lievens, after the days of his pupilage with Lastman, ever worked with or under Rembrandt. Since that paper was sent to the press I have carefully re-read my notes and made a further examination of the series of Lievens' prints in the British Museum, prepared to retract my opinion if I found sufficient ground for doing so; the result is that my conclusions are confirmed. Bartsch has catalogued sixty-six pieces by Lievens; four of these are woodcuts, and one was engraved by Savry after Lievens' design. De Claussin, writing in 1824, added one woodcut and four etchings

<sup>1</sup> It is singular how few of Rembrandt's prints, even in their later states, are marked as having been published for profit. There is sufficient evidence that he sold his prints, as probably every etcher and engraver before or since has done. It lowers our estimate of the accuracy of his early biographers to find them for this reason accusing him of meanness and avarice—'publishing,' says Houbraken, 'his etchings in an unfinished state to increase their variations, and enhance the value of early impressions.' Perhaps the spitefulness of this assertion may be accounted for by the inferior character of Houbraken's own etchings.

to this list: three woodcuts and ten etchings are still undescribed. Of the sixty-one etchings catalogued by Bartsch, twenty without name are of his earliest time, and twenty of the more important bear the address of Franc vanden Wyngaerde, a publisher of prints residing in Antwerp; three of these, in their earlier state, have the name of P. de Baillu, a print-dealer and engraver, also residing in Antwerp, and ten or twelve more are of the same period; from which we may conclude that thirty or thirty-two of Lievens' prints were executed during the years that he himself was residing in that city—that is, from 1634 to 1641 or 1642. In 1640 or 1641 he painted a large picture for the Hôtel de Ville at Leyden. Comparing him with Rembrandt at this time, we remark that in accuracy of drawing Lievens is rather the superior. We have no clear evidence as to where he lived in the years succeeding 1642; nor can we with any certainty assume that he continued the use of the needle until 1649, when he etched a portrait of Dr. Vander Steeren, priest of the Church of St. Michael at Antwerp—it is the only impression on which Lievens put a date. Later still is a portrait of Heinsius bearing the address, 'Joan Myssens exc Antwerpiae.' Somewhere about 1650–55 Lievens was at Amsterdam taking the portrait, on copper, of Ephraim Bonus (I use the Latinised form of the name as it appears in the inscription below the portrait); the publisher was Clement de Jonghe. The portrait of Vondel was also published at Amsterdam. Both these are elaborate pieces of considerable merit, and do not in any way compare with the 'Ecce Homo.' The fine portrait of Jacques Goutar is of his earlier time. The portrait of Gaspar Strezzo has no name of publisher, or, perhaps I ought to say, I do not know an impression with the address. The print is very rare, and as yet I have only met with one impression. If, therefore, we assume that Lievens assisted Rembrandt in the execution of the 'Ecce Homo'—copying the design which Rembrandt had created—we must first reject the date 1636 inscribed upon the plate, and substitute some date between 1642 and 1649, and next surmount the difficulty of assigning to Lievens the inferior position in regard to a print which bears in its earliest states evidences of error into which Lievens is hardly likely to have fallen. That in some instances there is a resemblance in detail between Rembrandt and Lievens is undoubted, but it is due, not to an imitation of Rembrandt, but to the early influence of Lastman. I am therefore, I think, justified in objecting to ascribe any part of the 'Ecce Homo' to Lievens. For what seem sufficient reasons I must also dismiss Fictoor, Eeckhout, and Koninck. Van Vliet at this time had descended to such inferior work that I feel compelled to set him aside. Could Bol have been the assistant? He had not yet begun to work on his own account. The figure to the left in the etching, with outstretched hand addressing the crowd, is not unlike his manner; the work upon the face of this man bears some resemblance to the work on the face of Isaac in his large print of 'Abraham's Sacrifice,' one of Bol's early pieces, and I think other parts in the 'Ecce Homo' will also compare with him, but I hesitate to assign the pupil-work in this plate. The question must, I think, yet remain undecided, and I should not like to pronounce upon it until I have completed a still more thorough and searching investigation of the whole works of 'the Rembrandt School.'

There are two other prints in which it is assumed that the work of another hand than Rembrandt's is seen, and which may be referred to here: they are No. 60, 'The Goldweigher' (W. 283, Bl. 189), and No. 62, 'A Painter Drawing from a Model' (W. 189, Bl. 157). The contrast between the highly-finished bust of 'The Goldweigher' and the coarse execution apparent in the boy by his side is sufficient to show that an inferior hand was employed upon the plate. The little figures in the background to the left are in the manner of Rembrandt; but we may, I think, without much hesitation, ascribe the greater part, if not the whole, of the details, except the figure of the goldweigher, to Bol. The face in the first state is unfinished. It may be that the Receiver Uytenbogaert was too busy at the time to sit for his portrait, and therefore the figure and its accessories were first completed, while



the features were left out until he had greater leisure; such, at least, is the explanation given by Wilson. An impression is described, formerly in the Denon collection, in which a face, not that of the Receiver, is sketched in with pencil in a masterly manner. I have been unable to trace this impression; it will probably be found in some private collection to which I have not yet had access. Of No. 62, 'A Painter Drawing from a Model,' the design in bistre is among the treasures of the Print Room in the British Museum; it has been reproduced by Vosmaer in the second edition of his 'Rembrandt: sa Vie et ses Œuvres,' recently issued. The piece has an additional interest for us in that it represents the *atelier* of the master; the projecting chimney is reproduced in others of his works—it is seen, for instance, in 'The Goldweigher'—other 'properties' belonging to the studio are represented. The date Vosmaer assigns to the print is 1646–48, and he does not regard any part of the detail as by an inferior hand, but compares the upper shaded background with that in No. 118, 'Portrait of Rembrandt Drawing' (W. 22, Bl. 235), and that in 'The Hundred Guilder.' It must be owned that the detail of this work differs considerably from the pupil-work in 'The Goldweigher,' and in the first state at least resembles that in the pieces with which he compares it, while the *ébauche* below might, I think, very properly be assigned even to a later year. I commend the piece with its difficulties to the criticism of amateurs.

After the year 1639 we have not in Rembrandt's prints any evidence of the direct work of pupils or assistants; but there is good reason for suspecting that many later 'states' were entirely unknown to the master. Some of the plates even remain to this day. When they are preserved with almost religious care, as is the copper of the Burgomaster Six in the family of his descendants, we can regard them with interest; but when we know that, rebitten and reworked, they have been, and still are, made to furnish impressions only to deceive the student and entrap the unwary, we cannot but regret that Rembrandt did not himself deface or destroy them.

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## VI.

December 24, 1876.

*The following paper was written in September 1876. A very fine impression of 'The Flight' (No. 168 in Cat.) was exhibited by Mr. Holford, and with it a photograph of Seghers' print, obtained for the Exhibition by permission, from Amsterdam.*

THE print which has long been known as the 'Flight into Egypt,' in the style of Elzheimer, has given rise to more debate than any other work in etching or drypoint which is assumed to have come from Rembrandt's hand; and, although amateurs are now agreed in attributing a considerable part of the composition to another, the exact history of the print is known, I believe, to very few. A few notes upon it may be acceptable. It is a print interesting not only for its beauty, but for its peculiarities of composition and execution, and, I might also add, for its rarity. Both in design and in technique it stands alone; and while some have believed that in his design for this print Rembrandt drew his inspiration from a scene which he himself had witnessed, resorting to perhaps novel yet simple means to produce the results he desired, others again see in this 'Flight into Egypt' the effort of one who in this instance was content to be an imitator, and, charmed with the etchings of a younger engraver, laid aside his own to assume the style, and—by unusual and not easily explained means—copied the technique as well as the composition before him, and, satisfied with the result, completed the plate by

the only additions which could really be called his own, the group of the Holy Family and the foreground and foliage to the right. The scene represented is a very charming one. Its main features are a valley stretching away in the centre, bounded on either side by hills clothed with hanging woods, which, opening as they recede, disclose a distant plain, with a winding river and buildings and towers almost lost in the haze. Far away in the horizon the plain is bounded by a chain of mountains, whose outlines are only faintly seen against the sky. In the near foreground on the right the Holy Family are perceived, Joseph leading the ass upon which the Mother and the Child are seated. They come from the right and are about descending into the valley below them. The extreme *unlikeness* of the whole of this beautiful landscape to every other picture which has been preserved to us as the work of the master at once strikes the observer. 'It certainly was not in Holland,' writes Charles Blanc, 'that Rembrandt, who drew his inspiration from Nature, could have met with such a scene.' There is a rising ground to the right in the landscape called 'The Three Trees' (W. 209). The background of the 'Canal and the Cow Drinking' (W. 234) presents a rocky elevation, but it is put in only as a background, and exhibits a configuration of rock and slope which would satisfy a mediæval artist rather than a modern painter. The elevation behind the 'Cottage with the White Palings' (W. 229) is a dyke. All Rembrandt's own landscapes are intensely Dutch. To this day the traveller in Holland may in every direction remark similar scenes to those which Rembrandt has depicted. Two hundred years have not obliterated them. 'Six's Bridge,' 'The Goldweigher's Field,' the canals, the mills, and the haybarns pictured by Rembrandt are repeated over and over again; 'The Obelisk' yet stands; a cupola is replaced on the 'Ruined Tower' (W. 220); but the valley with its steep sides and hanging woods, and the distant mountains which bound the well-watered plain, *dans le goût d'Elzheimer*, are entirely wanting.

In the manner of its execution, again, this landscape is unlike Rembrandt's usual work, and what, until now, has made it even more perplexing is the widely different effects upon the right and left sides of the plate, produced of course by as widely differing methods. The work on the boldly drawn foreground which, sloping from the right edge of the plate, crosses the centre before it reaches the lower margin, the roughly sketched groups of figures on the right passing in front of the dark-foliaged trees which rise nearly to the top of the plate, are in singular contrast to the lighter and softer tones of the rising ground and woods which border the valley to the left, and to the broad plain and far-away hills in the distance. The work in the foreground and on the right bears the unmistakeable sign-manual of the master. Sketched with great spirit and boldness, every stroke has its purpose, and beneath it all is a certain grey tone or tint whose presence has been explained by assuming that the ground was prepared for the engraving by being roughed with pumice-stone, the traces of which may be distinctly seen, not only beyond the outlines of the foliage above and to the left, but in the clear spaces left between the lines in the work itself. The prevailing colour of the work on the other side is a soft grey. The foliage, instead of being boldly executed, is hardly drawn in at all: it consists of dots more or less thickly spread, differing in their form and tone, while the few strokes that can be discovered appear rather to have been added as an afterthought than to have formed part of the original design. Whether Wilson's conjecture as to the process by which this part of the landscape was produced is correct or not, it will at any rate show the difference between the character of this work and that which we recognise as Rembrandt's usual style. He says:—

'If in spreading the varnish on a plate prepared for etching we bear hard with the dabber we shall find on removing it that the varnish has been penetrated, producing an infinite number of minute holes, particularly if it has begun to cool. . . . We may imagine that Rembrandt resorted to this manœuvre with effect, and that the masses of foliage were expressed, in the first instance, in the

greater part by the movement of the dabber, and completed by a second operation, preserving the lights from the corrosion of the acid by a brush dipped in liquid varnish.'<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may have been the means adopted, the result is admirable, and as we regard the whole composition, we are struck with the poetic fitness of M. Charles Blanc's idea that the painter meant to represent the effect of morning and sunshine coming forth to greet the exiled family at the moment when they are issuing from a forest traversed in the midst of perils, and in the profound darkness of night.<sup>2</sup> But, alas for all speculations as to the processes by which the result was attained! We now know that only a small part of the plate was engraved by Rembrandt; that the group of the Holy Family and some part of the foliage behind them are his; and his, too, is some of the work upon the foreground. But the whole of the left and centre of the piece is by another hand. Both English and foreign amateurs have long suspected this: a few only know the whole facts of the case. It is not, as some have thought, that Rembrandt has here largely borrowed from another: he has taken an already engraved plate which had come into his possession; has burnished out and erased the principal figures upon that plate; has in their place sketched in his own 'Flight into Egypt,' filling in the background where it was needed with new work. The grey undertone seen under the work on the right of the impression is caused by the rubbing with pumice-stone, which has only partially, however, removed the original figures: the landscape on the left and centre owes very little to Rembrandt's hand, but is the best work of an artist of far inferior merit.

In the Museum at Amsterdam is an impression from a plate by Hercules Seghers. The subject represents Tobit and the Angel in their journey into Media. These two figures are placed to the right—just where the Holy Family appears in the 'Flight into Egypt.' But they are on a much larger scale—too large in proportion to the size of the print. Tobit is in advance: the Angel, walking behind, leans over him with an air of protection: they are travelling towards the left. To give the rest of the description would only be to repeat what I have written of the 'Flight after the Manner of Elzheimer,' for the same plate has produced both impressions; and, guided by the figures in Seghers' group, we can reproduce many of their outlines under the work of Rembrandt. The angel's wing is clearly apparent in the upper foliage to the right. The outlines of the angel's left leg and foot are seen behind the near hind leg of the ass, and in front of the ass Tobit's left knee and foot can be discovered. The head of the angel comes to within  $1\frac{4}{10}$  inch (.035 mils.) from the top, the upper outline of his wing to about  $\frac{1}{10}$  inch.

This Hercules Seghers, or Zeghers, born in 1625, was an artist of some repute in Holland. In the inventory taken of Rembrandt's effects in 1656, six paintings by Seghers are enumerated. Some of his engravings, peculiar in their style, are enshrined in the British Museum; but the impression of 'Tobit and the Angel' is not among them. It will not, however, be necessary to make the pilgrimage to Amsterdam to become acquainted with the character and attitude of the group erased by Rembrandt, for Seghers borrowed these figures and a great part of the composition from an earlier artist.

There is an engraving by the Count Henry de Goudt, after a picture by Elzheimer, of which Seghers' print is so far a reproduction that he must have had it before him when he made his drawing on the copper. The Count de Goudt was born in 1585; he was the friend and patron of Adam Elzheimer, and engraved several of his pictures; among them this of 'Tobit and the Angel' (Utrecht, 1613). The impression is on a different sized plate, and in a reversed direction to Seghers' print; and there are many differences in detail. But the group of 'Tobit and the Angel' is the same: behind them rises a mass of dark foliage; the distance in the centre, failing in the Count's engraving in aerial perspective, shows a broad plain with towers: on the opposite side are hills clothed with hanging woods; and, as if to show that the similarity in composition was designed and not accidental,

<sup>1</sup> Wilson's *Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Blanc's *L'Œuvre Complet de Rembrandt*, vol. i. p. 127.

there are two little figures—a cow, and a man leaning upon a stick—which, appearing in Count de Goudt's copy of Elzheimer, are accurately reproduced in Seghers' print, and can be clearly seen on the bank to the left in Rembrandt's 'Flight into Egypt.'

I do not suppose that Rembrandt ever intended to pass off this 'Flight into Egypt' as his own composition. He was, as we know, well acquainted with Seghers' pictures, and would certainly have seen, probably possessed, every one of his etchings: the very plate of this one was in his hands. It is the most pleasing of all Seghers' etchings, but it fails from a too great sameness and uniformity of tone, and from the disproportionate size of the figures. The alterations which Rembrandt made in the plate were only such as could have come from a great master, and one can almost hear the rasping of the pumice as he erased the over-sized and weak figures which Seghers had copied, and watch his vigorous hand dash in the spirited work which takes their place. Assuredly we have no cause to regret the alteration, for, though we prove that so little of the work in this print is by Rembrandt, that little has drawn out the beauty of work which might otherwise have been entirely forgotten, and the fortunate owners of fine impressions will yet retain their admiration for this 'Flight into Egypt.'

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## VII.

June 30, 1877.

The interest which amateurs feel in regard to the etched work of Rembrandt has led me to discuss at greater length than I intended the extent to which the technic in certain important pieces is by the hand of the master. My remarks have necessarily been limited to the prints of his earlier time, since we do not find in his later days that there is the same apparent evidence of the execution of other hands than his own. I say apparent evidence, for it must always be remembered that we are discussing the work of the greatest master of the craft who has ever appeared—of one who would seem to have been rarely satisfied with himself, and who, as M. Vosmaer points out in a letter which I have had the honour of receiving from him, continually sought the new methods of expression. Etching, as he reminds me, is a thoroughly *personal* art, and one which hardly admits the interposition of an assistant. Still, as we have seen, there is at times so great and so serious a discrepancy between certain parts of the technic of an impression that we are justified in assuming that he allowed, in the particular cases quoted, the inferior hand of an assistant to complete the plate. This is, to quote an instance, seen in the 'Goldweigher' (No. 60), where the figure of the kneeling boy and the accessories of cask and trunk, &c., are so unequal to the exquisite handling of the fur coat of the Receiver, that we are almost driven to the conclusion that here some other etcher was employed. The proof in the 'Artist Drawing from a Model' is less evident, and I am not unprepared to yield assent to the opinion which further comparison may justify—that the whole of it is by Rembrandt, and if so, belongs to a later date, about 1645–48.

In this, my concluding paper, I propose only to draw attention to a few pieces which illustrate Rembrandt's power of composition, or tell of the thoroughness and reality with which he could carry out his conceptions. I must pass by many prints admirable in every way, and confine myself merely to a few—those, perhaps, not always the most striking, yet sufficient for my purpose. Take, for instance, the little print, No. 47, 'Abraham sending away Hagar and Ishmael' (W. 37, Bl. 3). Charles Blanc has written eloquently upon this touching little scene. How true and natural is every part of the composition—how perfectly is it carried out: Hagar's grief as she slowly turns her steps from

home; Abraham's face of saddened thoughtfulness, appearing only satisfied with his act because he recognises its necessity; Sarah's smile of exultation as she leans from the window to see her rival depart; the little Isaac peering through the doorway, half afraid that Ishmael may yet return; and even the dog hesitating whether to follow or stay behind! It is a perfect picture; and one that no other than Rembrandt could have invented, or have so finely executed. See, again, Nos. 50-51, 'The Death of the Virgin' (W. 104, Bl. 70), deservedly eulogised by Hamerton as the perfection of what etching should be—what reality there is in it, and yet what powerful imagination! We wish the master had not been so regardless of form in depicting the Angels, and had not so carelessly indicated the clouds in which they appear; but we remember that clouds and air in etching must always be more or less conventional, and concentrate our attention on that on which Rembrandt concentrated his genius; and where can we find a more wonderful picture of a death-bed? See, again, 'The Death of John the Baptist,' No. 64 (W. 97, Bl. 40), the attitude of the Baptist, the expression of calm resignation on his face—inferior though it is to that in the pen drawing which is placed beside it—the action of the executioner, and the stolid indifference of the slave who holds the dish to receive the martyr's head, are finely portrayed. Notice, too, the beautiful little Holbein-like print, No. 65, 'Youth surprised by Death' (W. 113, Bl. 79). The title is to some extent misleading, since it is evident that the gaily-dressed young couple are not aware of the grisly spectre suddenly rising in their path. What does it mean? Is it merely a fanciful variation from some Dance of Death, or was there a deeper, more personal feeling in the design? It is dated 1639. The dresses are not unfamiliar to us: we see the velvet cap and feather such as the artist assumed in the portrait of himself, No. 48, 'Rembrandt in a Mezetin Cap and Feather' (W. 20, Bl. 233); while the dress of the graceful figure by his side corresponds with the habiliments of his wife in the Cassel and Antwerp portraits. Is there any reference to the great sorrow which had recently befallen them, the death in its earliest infancy of Saskia's first child, which we know took place in the autumn of the previous year? And what can in its touching sadness surpass the little sketch, No. 90, which we recognise as the head of Rembrandt's dying wife (W. 353, Bl. 202), and then 'The little Resurrection of Lazarus,' No. 82 (W. 76, Bl. 47), and later on<sup>1</sup> 'The Funeral of Jesus,' No. 104 (W. 86, Bl. 60); each so full of tenderness and expression? Compositions like these show how completely the artist could realise the scene he would depict. Like the Scripture which they illustrate, each time we return to them we see depths of meaning and of feeling which at first we had passed over. A whole chapter could be written upon the 'Christ Healing the Sick,' of which four such superb impressions are exhibited.<sup>2</sup> They are mere sketches, and yet how much is told us in No. 144, 'Tobit Blind' (W. 46, Bl. 15), and No. 146, 'Jesus Christ in the Midst of His Disciples' (W. 94, Bl. 64), and how well do the beautiful prints, Nos. 161-62, 'The Descent from the Cross,' and 'The Presentation,' in what is called 'Rembrandt's dark manner,' repay our examination! Leaving 'The Flight into Egypt,' No. 168-69 (W. 61, Bl. 29), of which I have before written (see 'Academy,' December 23, 1876), we come to a set of Scripture pieces, admirable in their simplicity: No. 175, 'A Nativity' (W. 50, Bl. 18), No. 176, a 'Flight into Egypt' (W. 60, Bl. 28), No. 177, 'The Circumcision' (W. 52, Bl. 20), No. 176, a 'Holy Family' (W. 67, Bl. 34)—notice the typical serpent writhing from under the Virgin's foot—No. 180, 'Jesus Found'

<sup>1</sup> In my first chronological arrangement of the etchings I placed this 'Funeral' in the year 1632-33. I erred in good company, but no sooner was the print upon the walls of the Fine Art Gallery, than the mistake was apparent, and the 'Funeral' was relegated to what is probably very nearly its proper place—in 1646, close by 'Abraham Conversing with Isaac' (W. 38, Bl. 5), also signed Rembrant (the *d* omitted).

<sup>2</sup> There is a likeness in the principal figure to that of the Christ in 'The Woman Taken in Adultery,' a picture in the National Gallery. I do not know that this likeness has before been remarked.

(W. 64, Bl. 38), and of about the same period, No. 179, 'Jesus Christ Entombed' (W. 91, Bl. 61), a print of singular pathos and solemnity. How feelingly has Rembrandt treated the scene. He has represented the disciples laying the body of their Master in the tomb. An artist of less genius would have depicted them in more striking attitudes of grief; instead of this it is a picture almost of inaction; the fearful week through which all had passed is over, and it has left them utterly wearied and worn out; they bury their Master without one feeling of hope; they have not yet arrived even at resignation. It is the reaction which follows the extreme of sorrow. And then come those marvellous creations, Nos. 184-85, 'Our Lord before Pilate' (W. 80, Bl. 51), and Nos. 191-92, 'Our Lord Crucified,' or, as it is more commonly called, the 'Three Crosses' (W. 81, Bl. 53). Further on we have Nos. 203-4, 'St. Francis Praying' (W. 112, Bl. 78), a piece beautiful here, but only to be seen in its perfection in the very rare impressions of the first state, such as is the superb impression, undoubtedly the finest known, preserved at Amsterdam.

The 'Three Crosses,' of which I have just spoken, is so important a print that, as my own ideas regarding it differ to some extent from those expressed in the Preface to the Catalogue, I am tempted to add a few remarks. Two impressions of the first state of this print, and one of the third state called *the altered plate*, are exhibited. Of this magnificent work Mr. Haden says in the Preface to the Catalogue:—

'The plate from the very first was intended to be one of those dark plates of which we have an example in the 'Christ Entombed' (179). It was, therefore, useless to do more than indicate figures which were to be ultimately half obscured, and, this being so, we would ask how is it that this rude preparation for a chiaroscuro plate—for it really amounts to nothing more . . . so recommends itself to the collector that he will pay three times more for it than for the true and final expression of the perfected plate, which does not occur till towards its third state?'

I have quoted this passage in full, and felt it only right to do so before I express my own views. The *first state* of this print, as it is usually known, is that seen in Nos. 191-92. In the *second state*, among other alterations, additional shading appears in the right foreground, and upon the group to the left, the head of the man who is led away being now in shadow, and the name and date appear, *Rembrandt f 1653*. Impressions of this state, though not very common, are by no means rare, and gradations may be observed among them from those which are very little inferior to the first state, to those in which the burr is worn away and the beauty of the piece gone. The *third state*, No. 193, varies so much from the first and second that it has been even considered a different plate. It is, however, the same, for the worn-out work and the name and date can be discovered beneath the more recent additions. In later states the name of the publisher, Francis Carelse, appears, after which the plate was cut down.

It is quite true that the figures in the first state are most rudely indicated, and it is a natural presumption that the intention was to hide them in partial obscurity. What I contend for is that the intention, if it existed at all, was abandoned even in the earliest stages of the work, and that Rembrandt's true design is that which we see. The scene which he proposed to represent is, not the darkness which covered the land during the three hours' agony, but the final moment, when the light returned. There is an effect as of something startling and unexpected about the whole composition. Perhaps the least expressive figure is that of the Christ: Rembrandt has here been influenced by the formality of the Byzantine school, and yet how wonderfully death-like is the face, with exposed teeth and fallen jaw. The groups around and near, who have become awed by the supernatural darkness, are suddenly aroused by the last dying cry of the Saviour, and the instantaneous return of the light streaming down upon the Cross. The centurion is seen down upon his knees; one figure to the left

buries his face in his hands; the action of another near the Cross is expressive of a fresh outburst of grief; one fainting is supported by his friends; while two who have lately derided the Sufferer turn away to escape. The startled action of a woman seated on the ground near the Virgin is inimitable; even the movement of the dog in the centre is expressive of a sudden fear. Looking at it thus, we forget all faults or carelessness in drawing; we cease to think what in his first idea Rembrandt may have intended to achieve; we see nothing but a sublime conception—a marvellous picture, worthy indeed of the genius of the master. But turn to the print placed here between the two impressions, 'the altered plate,' No. 193. It is called the third state, but is almost a new design, certainly an inferior one; the figures were carelessly drawn before, they are badly drawn now: the most finely designed figure in the original piece, that of the thief crucified upon the right is actually blotted out, while the main feature is a clumsy mounted soldier in a grotesque head-dress; the treatment of the chiaroscuro is singularly unlike Rembrandt—mere vertical streaks of black and white; and, to deepen the shading, a large part of the plate has been covered with mechanically-ruled lines crossing and recrossing from corner to corner and top to bottom. Is it possible that all this is Rembrandt's work? There is a certain grandeur about it, for, rough and coarse as is the execution, it is nearly always found richly printed, and the subject itself, however unworthily treated, commands respect; but I have always believed it to be not merely an altered but a spoilt plate, and that the new work, meant to restore the worn-out copper, if by Rembrandt at all, which is, I think, open to doubt, shows far more carelessness than genius.

Going back now to the Landscapes, we see in all the evidence of Rembrandt's powers. How perfect are these quiet scenes in their composition and treatment!—see, for instance, No. 67, the print called 'Rembrandt's Mill' (W. 230, Bl. 333): the impression exhibited is certainly the finest I have ever met with. The 'Long Landscape with the Mill Sail' (W. 223, Bl. 326), and the two impressions of the 'Haybarn' (W. 222, Bl. 327), all perfect impressions, are of the highest excellence; and how very charming is No. 86, the lovely little picture of early dawn (W. 204, Bl. 310)! Then pass on to the 'Cottage with the White Pales' (W. 229, Bl. 332), one of the prettiest etchings I know. Close by hang two superb impressions of the 'Three Trees' (W. 209, Bl. 315), and at 103 we have the 'View of Omval'—a scene nothing in itself, a mere bend in the Amstel, within a short walk of the artist's home, but, transferred to his copper, it has become a picture of rare beauty. And what a charming little piece is the 'Grotto' (W. 228, Bl. 331)!—an old boat, a few feet of water, and a weed-grown bank, that is all—no, not all; in this, as in the rest, there is the genius of the master. Pass on to the landscapes of a later time, so entirely different in their handling. Rembrandt has discovered a new power in his needle. Rare and beautiful indeed are the examples shown. Each is a study; each has its own distinctive merits. It is Rembrandt's special claim upon our admiration that whatever subject he chose to illustrate the result is success. He copies a rare shell (W. 156, Bl. 353); the representation is perfect. He etches a hog; the beast lives, and we are amused at the epicurean indifference with which it regards the teasing of the mischievous urchin and the pity of the child. We see Rembrandt in portraiture perfect as in landscape. What master besides himself has left such work as appears in the 'Sylvius,' 'The Burgomaster,' and 'The Jewish Physician,' or again in the 'Lutma,' the 'Van Tol,' the 'Old Haaring,' and the 'Large Copenno!' It may be that in these we have not the most accurate likenesses of the painter's friends, but what wonderful faces they are! Who but Rembrandt has ever drawn such heads? From the miniatures in the 'Hundred Guilder' to the life size of 'Syndics' it is nearly always the same. The meanest face is expressive, the finest shows the mind rather than the features. Every head in the crowd around our Lord is a study of human sentiment or passion, and in every portrait we know that there are brains behind

the broad forehead or the speaking eyes. Is it any marvel that as years pass on, and our knowledge of the great master increases, our admiration of his work should keep pace, and that when we meet with such a passage as the following, we feel that in it is no exaggeration, but that it is only the language of a man who knew and could appreciate the genius of Rembrandt?

'Such were his powers of nature, such the grandeur, pathos, or simplicity of his compositions, from the most elevated or extensive arrangement to the meanest or most homely, that the best cultivated eye, the purest sensibility, and the most refined taste, dwell on them enthralled. Shakespere alone excepted, no one combined with so much transcendent excellence so many in other men unpardonable faults, and reconciles us to them. He possessed all the empire of light and shade, and all the tints that float between them; he tinged his pencil with equal success in the cool of dawn, in the noon-day ray, in the livid flash, in the evanescent twilight, and rendered even darkness visible.'

One word before I bring my notes to a close—a word to express the gratitude which all lovers of art must feel to the generous owners of these rare and costly prints, who have so kindly parted with them a while, enabling us to increase our knowledge of the etched work of the master, and mature our judgment by a study of impressions, many of them so rare, so fine in condition, and so perfect.

A fitting crown to the Exhibition is the beautiful portrait of Rembrandt by himself, kindly lent by the Earl of Portarlington.







*In preparation (due notice of publication will be given)*

A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE  
OF THE  
ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT

BY THE  
REV. C. H. MIDDLETON

































































































